

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00

SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 OPR-02 EUR-12 ARAE-00 /064 W

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O R 071446Z DEC 76

FM AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1888

INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

AMEMBASSY NASSAU

AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRIDGETOWN 2393

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT,CGEN,SHUM

SUBJ: GRENADA'S ELECTION

BEGIN SUMMARY: ON TUESDAY, DECEMBER 7, APPROX
60,000 GRENADIANS ARE EXPECTED TO VOTE FOR THE FIFTEEN
HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY SEATS AND THUS TO DETERMINE THE COMPOSITION
OF THE NEXT GOVT. RUNNING AGAINST PRIMIN
ERIC M. GAIRY'S GRENADA UNITED LABOUR PARTY (GULP) IS A
COALITION OF THREE OPPOSITION PARTIES, THE MODERATE GRENADA
NATIONAL PARTY (GNP), THE RADICAL LEFTIST NEW JEWEL MOVEMENT
(NJM) AND A ONE-MAN PAPER PARTY, THE UNITED PEOPLES PARTY
(UPP). THE OPPOSITION COALITION ("THE PEOPLE'S ALLIANCE")
IS DOMINATED BY THE NJM, WHICH HAS SUPPLIED EIGHT OF ITS FOURTEEN
CANDIDATES AND VIRTUALLY ALL OF ITS CAMPAIGN WORKERS.

UNTIL RECENTLY, THE EMBASSY FELT GAIRY COULD PROBABLY
WIN EVEN AN HONEST ELECTION BUT THAT, IN ANY CASE, A FAIR
CONTEST WAS UNLIKELY. HOWEVER, RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN-
DICATE THE GOVT PARTY IS IN TROUBLE AND STANDS A
BETTER THAN 50-50 CHANCE OF LOSING THE ELECTION. WHILE
THE ALLIANCE'S MODERATE PARTIES (GNP AND UPP) MIGHT POS-
SIBLY CONTROL AN ALLIANCE GOVT IF THEIR SUCCESSFUL
CANDIDATES OUTNUMBER THOSE ELECTED BY THE NJM, THIS AP-
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PEARS UNLIKELY. IN OUR VIEW, AN ALLIANCE GOVT, IF

ELECTED, WILL PROBABLY BE, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF CUBA, THE MOST RADICAL AND NOISILY ANTI-US REGIME IN THE HEMISPHERE, ALBEIT A REGIME CONTROLLING ONE OF THE WORLD'S SMALLEST AND POOREST INDEPENDENT STATES.

BOTH GULP AND ALLIANCE VICTORIES AT THE POLLS, AS WELL AS TWO POSSIBLE CONCOMITANT NON-MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE OUTCOMES -- A PRE-EMPTIVE GAIRY COUP AND AN NJM ARMED UPRISING-- POSE SOME THREAT TO THE POST-ELECTION SAFETY OF AMERICAN CITIZEN RESIDENTS. THE EXTENT OF THIS THREAT CANNOT BE DETERMINED AT THE PRESENT TIME. END SUMMARY.

1. THE ISSUES: COMMUNISM, CHRISTIANITY, CZECHOSLOVAKIA - AND CLANCY. ALTHOUGH GAIRY HAS EMBARKED ON THE EXPECTED PRE-ELECTION EFFORT TO REPAIR ROADS AND OTHERWISE IMPROVE THE SUPERFICIAL APPEARANCE OF HIS DOMAIN AND WELL-BEING OF ITS PEOPLE, THE ELECTORAL BATTLE HAS BECOME ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY A FIGHT OVER "RIGHTS." GULP PROPOGANDA DESCRIBES THE ALLIANCE AS A FRONT FOR THE NJM, WHICH IN TURN IS THE LOCAL INCARNATION OF "GODLESS COMMUNISM" BENT ON THE RUTHLESS DESTRUCTION OF THE CHURCH AND FAMILY. INCREASINGLY STRIDENT GULP RADIO PROPAGANDA DRAWS HEAVILY ON THE 1948 CZECH COUP AND ALLEGATIONS THAT AN ALLIANCE GOVT WOULD "TURN CHURCHES INTO DISCOTEQUES" AND DEPORT "FOREIGNERS" (READ US FRAUD FUGITIVE ELMER ZEEK, ALIAS JOHN CLANCY) WHO HAVE HELPED GRENADA RECOVER FROM HURRICANE JEWEL." THE OPPOSITION IS RELYING ON ITS CRITICISM OF GAIRY'S RECORD OF OPPRESSION, INCLUDING AMATEURISH POLICE BRUTALITY, HIS FAILURE TO SCORE WITH ANY OF HIS SOMETIMES BIZARRE DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES, AND HIS OFTEN ERRATIC AND SOMETIMES LUDICROUS PUBLIC CONDUCT.

2. THE CAMPAIGN: BY FAR THE MAJOR SURPRISE HAS BEEN THE VIGOR AND COMPETENCE OF THE NJM EFFORT. IN ADDITION TO THEIR EFFECTIVE STUMPING, YOUTHFUL NJM CADRE HAVE CROSS-INDEXED THE VOTING ROLLS IN AN ATTEMPT TO SHORT CIRCUIT GAIRY'S ASSUMED PLANS TO HAVE HIS SUPPORTERS VOTE IN MORE THAN ONE CONSTITUENCY. THE ALLIANCE, IN SPITE OF GAIRY'S ATTEMPTS AT PROVOCATION, HAVE BEEN CAREFUL NOT TO GIVE THE GOVT ANY PRETEXT TO CANCEL THE ELECTION.

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3. THE VOTERS: GAIRY'S POWER BASE IS THE OLDER, RURAL SEGMENT OF GRENADA'S 105,000 CITIZENS. MANY OF THESE, HOWEVER, ARE REPORTED TO PLAN NOT TO VOTE AT ALL. APPARENTLY, WHILE REMAINING SUFFICIENTLY GRATEFUL FOR GAIRY'S PAST EFFORTS IN REFORMING THE PLANTATION SYSTEM TO REFRAIN FROM VOTING ALLIANCE, MANY OF THESE VOTERS ARE DISPLEASED ENOUGH WITH THE PM'S RECENT ANTICS TO WITHHOLD THEIR VOTES.

THE "YOUTH" (18-35 AGE) GENERALLY ARE ANTI-GAIRY, AND
THE FACT THAT THE ELECTORATE HAS INCREASED 53 PERCENT
-- AN INCREASE MADE UP ENTIRELY OF 18-26 YEAR OLDS --
IS AN OMINOUS SIGN FOR HIS CHANCES.

4. STEALING THE ELECTION? GIVEN THE NJM'S EFFORT AND
THE ISLAND'S ELECTORAL SYSTEM, IT WILL BE DIFFICULT IF
NOT IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE GOVT TO RIG THE ELECTION.
ALLIANCE SUPPORTERS ACTUALLY CLAIM THAT, IF STEALING
VOTES CAN BE REDUCED TO ONLY 15 PERCENT, THEY'RE IN.

5. "THE MAN:" AS ALREADY NOTED, GAIRY HIMSELF IS A MAJOR ISSUE.
DURING A TWO-HOUR TALK WITH AN EMBASSY
OFFICER ON DECEMBER 4, GAIRY PROFESSED RESTRAINED OPTIMISM
THAT THE GULP WOULD WIN. HE EXPRESSED CONCERN, HOWEVER, OVER
THE FACT THAT -- ACCORDING TO HIM -- THE NJM IS ARMED FOR A
POST-ELECTION COUP.

6. THE OUTCOME: AS WE SEE IT, THE RESPECTIVE CHANCES OF
GULP AND THE ALLIANCE FOR WINNING THE ELECTION ARE 35-65.
HOWEVER, GULP CAN AT BEST WIN NARROWLY, WHILE THERE IS,
IN OUR VIEW, A 25 PERCENT CHANCE OF AN ALLIANCE SWEEP.
NO ONE QUESTIONS THAT AN ALLIANCE VICTORY WOULD RESULT IN
THE NJM "CO-ORDINATOR", MAURICE BISHOP, BECOMING PRIMIN.
(IN THE PRESENT GOVT GULP HOLDS 14 OF 15 SEATS, THE
FIFTEENTH BEING HELD BY THE GNP LEADER, HERBERT BLAISE.)

7. AFTER THE ELECTION: IF THE OPPOSITION WINS BIG, GAIRY IS
EXPECTED TO EITHER (A) USE FORCE IN AN ATTEMPT TO ANNUL THE
RESULT, OR (B) FLEE THE COUNTRY. A NARROW ALLIANCE VICTORY
MIGHT TEMPT HIM TO REMAIN IN THE HOPE THAT THE ALLIANCE'S
COMPONENT ELEMENTS WOULD QUARREL AMONG THEMSELVES AND THAT
THE GULP COULD ABET AND TAKE ADVANTAGE OF INTRA-ALLIANCE
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DIVISIONS.

8. VIOLENCE?: AN ALLIANCE VICTORY, EVEN WITHOUT A COUP
ATTEMPT BY GAIRY, WOULD PROBABLY INVOLVE SOME VIOLENCE BY
NJM SUPPORTERS. HOWEVER, IT WOULD BE PROBABLY BE MINOR AND
COULD BE QUICKLY CONTROLLED. A GAIRY ATTEMPT TO BLATANTLY
STEAL THE ELECTION WILL PROVOKE THE NJM TO FIGHT BACK AND
IT IS BELIEVED THEY HAVE AT LEAST ENOUGH ARMS TO CAUSE REAL
TROUBLE. (THE LONE BRITISH GOVT OFFICIAL STATIONED
ON GRENADA BELIEVES THE NJM TO HAVE A CACHE OF MOSTLY
STOLEN ARMS.) IN THE EVENT OF A FIGHT, THE POLICE ARE
EXPECTED TO REMAIN LARGELY NEUTRAL AND THE DEFENSE FORCE
TO SUPPORT GAIRY.

9. DANGER TO U.S. CITIZENS:

WE DO NOT EXPECT POST ELECTION VIOLENCE TO BE SPECIFICALLY DIRECTED AT FOREIGNERS. WE HAVE, HOWEVER, REVIEWED E&E PLANNING, INFORMALLY COORDINATED WITH THE BRITISH AND CANADIANS AND HAVE PLANS TO SEND AN OFFICER TO THE ISLAND IF SERIOUS PROBLEMS DEVELOP. ON A DEC. 4-6 VISIT, AN EMBASSY OFF CONTACTED KEY RESIDENT AMERICANS AND MADE PLANS TO CONTACT THEM AGAIN, IF NECESSARY. THE BRITISH OFFICIAL STATIONED ON GRENADA HAS ESTABLISHED EVACUATION PROCEDURES AND HAS PROMISED TO ALSO ASSIST AMERICANS WANTING TO LEAVE. AT THIS JUNCTURE, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO DETERMINE THE EXTENT OF THE THREAT TO FOREIGNERS.

10. US INTERESTS: WHILE OUR INTERESTS IN A MICRO-ISLAND STATE LIKE GRENADA ARE RELATIVELY MINOR, THEY CLEARLY WILL NOT BE WELL SERVED IF THE ISLAND IS CONTROLLED BY EITHER AN ERRATIC DICTATOR (WHICH GAIRY MUST BECOME IF HE SURVIVES) OR THE PRO-CUBA NJM. UNFORTUNATELY, THERE IS SCANT PROBABILITY OF ANY THIRD ALTERNATIVE. MODERATE ALLIANCE SUPPORTERS PROFESS TO BELIEVE THE GNP/UPP CAN CONTROL THE NJM AFTER AN ELECTORAL VICTORY OR THAT THE NJM IS NOT ALL THAT RADICAL. AS WE SEE IT, THEY ARE WHISTLING IN THE DARK. AN ALLIANCE GOVT, NO MATTER HOW IT COMES TO POWER, WILL BE A NJM SHOW, E.E., AUTHORITARIAN, PRO-CUBAN AND ANTI-AMERICAN, AND IT IS DOUBTFUL THERE WILL EVER BE ANOTHER FREE ELECTION IN GRENADA.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS, ELECTION FORECASTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 DEC 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BRIDGE02393
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760452-0885
From: BRIDGETOWN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761264/aaaaccqe.tel
Line Count: 201
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13 JUL 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <13 JUL 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <14 JUL 2004 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: GRENADA'S ELECTION BEGIN SUMMARY: ON TUESDAY, DECEMBER 7, APPROX 60,000 GRENADIANS ARE EXPECTED TO VOTE FOR THE FIF
TAGS: PINT, CGEN, SHUM
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006